

The Art of Follow-up

Ok, so the tough part is over. You got all dolled up. You arrived early. You thought about the questions that would be asked and had solid answers and stories to prove you are someone they should not let get away. You shook their hands confidently and looked them in the eye. Things seemed to go well. Now what do you do? How and when do you follow up? What is follow up?

Basically follow up is understanding that your job at convincing them to hire you does not end with the interview. Those who chalk up the interview as something to check off your to do list are missing an important part of the sales process.

We have all heard direct marketers say that it takes many mailings, many emails, many contacts before a customer is sufficiently motivated to take action. It is much the same when it comes to selling yourself to an employer. Customers have to come to feel that they trust you before they will buy, and employers are much the same way. Direct marketers use several different pieces of advertising when they target a customer base.

As a job seeker, you also have several pieces of advertising to offer that helps employers get to know you and feel comfortable around you. There is the application, cover letter and resume for starters. Be sure the application is filled out completely with no blank lines. If necessary, use N/A for not applicable. Since employers only have first impressions to go by, you want them to see you as a thorough worker with nothing to hide. Cover letters should be to the point, highlight the benefits of the features you have to offer and come in at 3-4 short paragraphs. Define what is your overall worth to the job market.

Resumes again should cover the benefits and features of the product, or how you will make their life easier, and stress your accomplishments. They need to know your job duties, but what separates a good product from a great product is remembering all the special projects you completed, the times you went above and beyond, and how the market recognized your skills. You also stress this in the interview. The interview was your opportunity to become more than a good piece of paper to them, but to add dimension and warmth to your offer.

But you are not done selling yet. The one mistake most job seekers make is to not follow up with a thank you letter to those who interviewed you. This is crucial and since many job seekers skip this part it just might impress your interviewers enough to put you over the top. But you can also use it to fix problems. Undoubtedly there were a few pitches you forgot to mention. Put those arguments into your follow up letter. If you think they misunderstood something you said, you have an opportunity here to try again.

Be sure to send a letter to everyone who interviewed you. To be safe with spellings, politely ask the receptionist on your way out, or review the directory if there is one. You are not done yet. Should you wait for them to call? Or do they expect you to call, and how often. It may be different in other parts of the country, but in this area it often can

take from a month to six weeks to hear back as to whether or not you got the job. Also there can be follow up interviews with other people in the company before a decision is made. Some companies wait a while on purpose to see who will enquire and show the most desire and enthusiasm about working for the company.

If you don't hear within a week, it is customarily acceptable to call and enquire as to the status of your employment request. You certainly don't want to call more often than once a week, and it is a good idea to ask HR when they would prefer that you check back if no decision has been made. But touching base will show your eagerness to work for them. And employers like enthusiastic eager employees.

You can learn more about the job search process by attending the Job Seekers Clinic normally held three different 20- hour sessions a month at the Missouri Career Center.

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